

SUICIDE: the intentional cause of one's own death

SUMMARY

The Bible never directly gives a systematic teaching on suicide. There is no verse that explicitly says: “suicide sends someone to hell,” or “suicide is the unforgivable sin” or “suicide is appropriate.” Most Christian theology is built from broader biblical principles, not a single direct prohibition.

People in the Bible who die by suicide:

- Samson: brought a temple down on himself (Judges 16)
- King Saul: falls on his sword (1 Samuel 31)
- Saul's armor-bearer: falls on his sword (1 Samuel 31)
- Ahithophel: hangs himself after his advice fails (2 Samuel 17)
- King Zimri: burns himself in palace (1 Kings 16)
- Judas Iscariot: hangs himself after betraying Jesus (Matt 27:5)

These accounts are descriptive, not teaching passages. The Bible describes them and does not teach about them. They are never portrayed as models of faithfulness and are often tied to: despair, defeat, guilt, and self-judgment.

If you or someone you know is currently experiencing thoughts of suicide, or a mental health or substance use crisis, please call 988 to reach Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and speak with a trained crisis specialist 24/7.

For additional information , please visit [988Indiana.org](https://www.988indiana.org).

More than just an easy-to-remember number

988 offers a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress – whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. 988 is a way forward. It's someone who gets you, a listening ear and the nonjudgmental support you need. It's whatever help you need, when you need it, where you need it.

Additional Resources:

- [Crisis Text line](#): Text IN to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis counseling. We're here for you.
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#) (for military service members, veterans, and family): Call 800-273-8255 and press 1

If a suicide attempt has occurred, call 911 immediately or go to a nearby hospital emergency room.

CORE TEACHINGS ON SUICIDE IN CHRISTIANITY [BIBLE]

Life (and even death) belongs to God

- Humans made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27)
- God is giver and sustainer of life (Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 2:6, Job 14:5, Psalm 139:16, John 10:10)
- God commands us not to take life or treat life carelessly (Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 30:19, Ephesians 5:15-17, Colossians 4:5)

God has compassion toward suffering

- God is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 23, Psalm 34:18)
- Human weakness is real and present in our flesh (Matthew 26:41, Romans 7:18, Galatians 5:17, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 John 2:16)
- Despair often comes from overwhelming pain, not rational rebellion (1 Kings 19:4, Psalm 42:11, 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

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Christian traditions emphasize:

- Every human life has inherent dignity
- Life should be preserved
- Christian ethics oppose things that destroy life

Christian theology often argues suicide:

- rejects God's sovereignty over life and death
- violates the command against killing
 - yet, the word used is "murder" not "killing"
- disregards the image of God in oneself

CORE TEACHINGS ON SUICIDE IN CHRISTIANITY [CHURCH FATHERS]

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) argued:

- Suicide is a violation of “You shall not kill”
- Life belongs to God, not us
- Suicide was seen as self-murder
- Do not confuse suicide with false-martyrdom

Augustine determined that suicide was an un-repent-able sin. St. Augustine is generally credited with offering the first justification of the Christian prohibition on suicide. He saw the prohibition as a natural extension of the fifth commandment: *“The law, rightly interpreted, even prohibits suicide, where it says ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ This is proved especially by the omission of the word ‘thy neighbor’, which are inserted when false witness is forbidden in the commandment there is no limitation added nor exception made in favor of anyone, and least of all in favor of him on whom the command is laid!”* (Augustine, book I, chapter 20)

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) gave three classic arguments:

Suicide is wrong because it:

1. Violates natural self-preservation
2. Harms the community
3. Usurps God’s authority over life and death (Aquinas 1271, part II, Q64, A5)

Thomas Aquinas, following Augustine, classified suicide as a mortal sin that cannot be forgiven. This conclusion was codified in the medieval doctrine that suicide nullified human beings' relationship to God, for our control over our body was limited to *usus* (possession, employment) where God retained *dominium* (dominion, authority). Law and popular practice in the Middle Ages sanctioned the desecration of the suicidal corpse, along with confiscation of property and denial of Christian burial.

CORE TEACHINGS ON SUICIDE IN CHRISTIANITY [PROTESTANTS]

The Protestant Reformers, including Calvin, condemned suicide as roundly as did the established Church, but held out the possibility of God treating suicide mercifully and permitting repentance. Interest in moral questions concerning suicide was particularly strong in this period among England's Protestants, notably the Puritans. Nonetheless, the traditional Christian view prevailed well into the late seventeenth century, where even an otherwise liberal thinker such as John Locke echoed earlier Thomistic arguments, claiming that “though God bestowed upon us our natural personal liberty, that liberty does not include the liberty to destroy oneself” (Locke 1690, ch. 2, para. 6).

Protestant views vary widely:

- Suicide is “an automatic ticket to hell”
- Suicide is sinful “and I don’t know what else”
- Suicide is sinful, but not the unforgivable sin
- Suicide is a tragedy
- Salvation depends on Christ, not the final act
- If suicide could cancel salvation, Scripture would say so clearly

FURTHER ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT OF TAKING ONE’S LIFE:

<https://www.gotquestions.blog/suicide-Bible.html>

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/live-it-post/what-does-the-bible-say-about-suicide/>

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/live-it-post/christian-depression-and-mental-health/>

<https://www.catholic.com/qa/does-the-bible-forbid-suicide>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16095470/>

<https://jbqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/373/373suicide.pdf>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_suicide

<https://insight.org/article/still-living-grieving-after-a-suicide>

<https://bibleresources.org/suicide/>

TENSIONS CHRISTIANS WRESTLE WITH

Sanctity of life vs. God's mercy

Christian theology holds both that life is sacred (suicide is wrong) AND God is merciful (salvation not reduced to last moment).

Sin vs. Suffering

Modern theology increasingly emphasizes that suicide often flows from intense suffering or illness which means churches are called to compassion and prevention and reduce isolation risk.

BALANCED BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

Suicide contradicts God's design for life

It is usually considered sin in Christian theology

It is not clearly taught as unforgivable in Scripture

God's mercy, grace, and understanding of human suffering are central

Christians are called to protect life and care for those suffering

Suicide is rarely about rejecting God

Suicide is usually about overwhelming pain, trauma, or mental illness

Church response should be compassion + support + presence

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WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"They are in a better place."

"Everything happens for a reason."

"God has a plan."

You don't need to ask about the details.

"You will feel better soon."

PHRASES TO SAY:

"took their life"

"completed suicide"

"died by suicide"

WHAT TO SAY:

"I hate that this happened."

"I am so sorry for you."

"I am here to listen."

"You don't have to do this alone."

"I don't have words but I care."

"This is a lot. I know you hurt."

"God is near to your broken heart."

"I will pray with you if you want"

What day this week can I bring dinner?

"I will check on you next week too."